

RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
INSTITUTE OF WORLD HISTORY
Russian Endowment for Science and Education
Dmitriy Pozharskiy University

GAUDEAMUS IGITUR

Studies to Honour the 60th Birthday
of A.V. Podossinov

Edited by
T.N. JACKSON, I.G. KONOVALOVA AND G.R. TSETSKHLADZE

MOSCOW
2010

РОССИЙСКАЯ АКАДЕМИЯ НАУК
ИНСТИТУТ ВСЕОБЩЕЙ ИСТОРИИ
Русский Фонд Содействия Образованию и Науке
Университет Дмитрия Пожарского

GAUDEAMUS IGITUR

Сборник статей к 60-летию
А.В. Подосинова

Под редакцией
Т.Н. ДЖАКСОН, И.Г. КОНОВАЛОВОЙ, Г.Р. ЦЕЦХЛАДЗЕ

МОСКВА
2010

УДК 930.85
ББК 63.3(0)32+63.4

Подготовлено к печати и издано
Русским Фондом Содействия Образованию и Науке
по решению Ученого совета
Университета Дмитрия Пожарского, 2010 год

GAUDEAMUS IGITUR: Сборник статей к 60-летию А.В. Подосинова /
Под ред. Т.Н. Джаксон, И.Г. Коноваловой, Г.Р. Цецхладзе. — М.: Русский Фонд
Содействия Образованию и Науке, 2010. — 488 с.

ISBN 978-5-91244-020-5

Предлагаемый вниманию читателей сборник подготовлен к 60-летию доктора исторических наук, главного научного сотрудника Института всеобщей истории РАН Александра Васильевича Подосинова. В сборник вошли статьи российских и зарубежных ученых по широкому кругу проблем антиковедения в целом, ориентации в пространстве, исторической географии, отвечающие научным интересам юбиляра.

Для историков, филологов, специалистов в области вспомогательных исторических дисциплин, для исследователей древнейшего периода истории Восточной Европы.

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ISBN 978-5-91244-020-5



SOME REMARKS ON THE RIVERS OF CENTRAL ASIA IN ANTIQUITY

MAREK JAN OLBRYCHT

Rivers and seas were crucial reference points for ancient peoples of Eurasia and the identification of watercourses is essential to any historical analysis¹. In attempts to identify rivers of ancient Central Asia, a philological or historical approach will not suffice, what with the complex water system in the area between the Caspian Sea and the Pamir Mountains changing over the millennia. For this reason, it is difficult to make a link between ancient sources and old hydrographic system. At the core of that arrangement in Central Asia was the river called *Oxos* by the ancients, now known as the *Āmū Daryā* (Greek Ὠξος/ᾠξος, Latin *Oxus*, Old Iranian *Waxšu*). But unlike today, when the river flows into the Aral Sea, in antiquity it fed into Lake Sarykamysch and was connected with the Caspian Sea, as is made clear by many classical accounts. And yet, publication after scholarly publication, the assumption was that the hydrographic network of ancient Central Asia was the same as or very similar to the present state².

Even today in Karakum there is an old river remaining after a large former watercourse, the Usboi, which issued from Lake Sarykamysch, once fed by waters of the *Āmū Daryā*. Usboi's total length is 775 km, with its main bed (its precipitous banks reach heights of 20–30 m) from Lake Sarykamysch to the foot of the Great Balkhan Mountains being 550 km long³. The water level

¹ This is emphasised by Подосинов А.В. Из истории античных географических представлений // ВДИ. 1979. № 1. С. 147–166; Он же. Картографический принцип в структуре географических описаний древности (постановка проблемы) // Методика изучения древнейших источников по истории народов СССР. М., 1978. С. 22–45; Он же. Гидрография Восточной Европы в античной и средневековой геокартографии // Джаксон Т.Н., Калинина Т.М., Коновалова И.Г., Подосинов А.В. «Русская река»: Речные пути Восточной Европы в античной и средневековой географии. М., 2007. С. 14–97. For Central Asia, the role of rivers as something of a geographic grid reference used by ancient authors was highlighted by Пьянков И.В. Средняя Азия в античной географической традиции. М., 1997. С. 184–190. See also Herrmann A. *Alte Geographie des unteren Oxusgebiets* (=Abh. der Königl. Ges. der Wiss. zu Göttingen, Phil.-hist. Klasse. N.F. Bd. XV. Nr. 4). В., 1914; Бартольд В.В. Работы по исторической географии // Бартольд В.В. Сочинения. М., 1965. Т. III. С. 97–233.

² For more on Turkestan's rivers, especially the *Āmū Daryā*, see Herrmann A. *Alte Geographie*; Markwart J. *Wehrot und Arang*. Leiden, 1938; Пьянков И.В. *Средняя Азия*; Стеблин-Каменский И.М. *Река иранской прародины* // Ономастика Средней Азии / В.А. Никонов, А.М. Решетов. М., 1978. С. 72–74; Вайнберг Б.И. *Этногеография Турана в древности*. М., 1999.

³ On the Usboi, see Кесъ А.С. *Русло Узбой и его генезис*. М.; Л., 1939 (=Труды Института

in Lake Sarykamysch changed constantly. As late as 1878, 1889, and 1896, the *Āmū Daryā* flowed into Sarykamysch, making it an undrained lake. At present, however, the river feeds into the Aral Sea. In its lower run, the Usboi passes into brackish marshes of Kel'kor, extending for about 80 km to the Caspian shore. In antiquity, Kel'kor was probably waterlogged as part of the sea.

Disputes as to whether the Usboi functioned in antiquity go back to the second half of the 19th century. Some believed the Usboi existed as a river in antiquity, others put that phase at the 13th–16th centuries⁴. A. Herrmann argued that the river existed in ancient times as well as in the Middle Ages⁵. Many were fully against. W.W. Tarn wrote: "No competent person to-day believes that the Oxus ever entered the Caspian bodily in historical times"⁶. Similar opinions were shared by many scholars, including distinguished Orientalists⁷.

S.P. Tolstov's Choresmian Expedition's work and years-long research by C. Jusupov brought a vast amount of archaeological material from around the Usboi. Some of it comes from the Stone and Bronze Ages, but especially numerous are artifacts from the second half of the 1st millennium BC and the first half of the 1st millennium AD. The finds are mainly remnants of nomadic burial grounds and a handful of settlements. Major compounds include the Kel'kor 2 necropolis and settlements (4th century BC – 2nd–3rd centuries AD), Cholyngyry graves and settlements (1st–4th centuries AD), and Ichany-depe cult complex (5th–2nd centuries BC). On the middle Usboi existed an Igdy-kala fortress uncovered in 1954 and 1956 and dated following research in the 1970s to ca. the 2nd century BC – 4th century AD⁸. Such a large concentration of finds on the Usboi must have reflected the location's favorable climatic conditions and ample water supply. Archaeological data, therefore, make it clear that the Usboi was a living river in ancient times and that the Amu Darya then fed not into the Aral, but into Sarykamysch.

Several ancient sources mention the River Ochos (Greek Ὠχος, Latin *Ochus*), the most informative being the *Geography* by Strabo of Amaseia. The problem of identifying the Ochos is a particularly glaring example of the confusion prevalent in the historical geography of Central Asia and Iran. It was identified quite at random with a dozen watercourses in the vast area from the Gorgān province

географии АН СССР. Т. 30); Низовья Аму-дарьи, Сарыкамыш, Узбой. История формирования и заселения. М., 1960 (=Материалы Хорезмской археологической экспедиции. Вып. 3). С. 267–347; Юсупов Х. *Древности Узоя*. Ашхабад, 1986. С. 4 и след.

⁴ Scholarly disputes in the 19th and early 20th centuries are presented by Herrmann A. *Alte Geographie*. S. 5–7.

⁵ Ibid. S. 1ff.

⁶ Tarn W.W. *The Greeks in Bactria and India*. Cambridge, 1938. P. 490.

⁷ Shahbazi S. *Darius in Scythia and Scythians in Persepolis* // *Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran*. 1982. Bd. 15. S. 228; Frye R. *A History of Ancient Iran*. Munich, 1984. P. 18.

⁸ Cf. Юсупов Х. *Древности Узоя*.

in north-eastern Iran up to Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. Trying to solve the puzzle of the Ochos location, the German historian A. Herrmann almost a hundred years ago pointed out that there existed two rivers by that name, one in Bactria (the Ram Gul Tagao/Sangalak/Āb-e Andkhūy in western Afghanistan), the other in Hyrcania (the Atrak in north-eastern Iran)⁹. Some scholars accepted Herrmann's two-Ochos hypothesis, but their respective locations remain unsettled¹⁰. And so, for example, J. Markwart identified the classical Ochos with two rivers, the Zariaspes and the Tedzhen¹¹. I.N. Chlopin saw the Hyrcanian Oxos as Atrak, while the Bactrian Ochos as Tedzhen¹². According to I.V. P'jankov, the Ochos should be identified as the Kondūz in Afghanistan as well as the Atrak in Iran¹³.

The most information about the Ochos comes from Strabo, even if the sources from which he drew are inconsistent. Strabo borrowed the most ample and valuable data about the river from a work by Apollodoros of Artemita (FGrH 779), a Parthian writer living in the 1st century BC. As an Arsacid subject and a knowledgeable scholar, Apollodoros was a first-rate source on the geography of Iran and Central Asia (Strabo II.5.12).

Especially important is fragment Strabo XI.7.3, on the River Ochos:

The Ochos is not mentioned at all by the ancient writers. Apollodoros, however, who wrote the Parthika, names it continually, implying that it flows very close to the country of the Parthians (Parthyaioi).

Thus the Ochos must have flowed near Parthia – Apollodoros certainly

⁹ Herrmann A. *Alte Geographie*. S. 31–35. As for the identification of the Bactrian Ochos, Herrmann subscribed to K.J. Neumann's apud Behr A. *De Apollodori Artamiteni reliquis atque aetate*. Strasburg, 1888. P. 16.

¹⁰ The present author published his first remarks on the Ochos rather more than a decade ago (1992), favoring identification with the Usboi in Turkmenistan and the Āb-e Andkhūy in Afghanistan (*Ольбрыхт М.Я.* Проблемы исторической географии Туркменистана в эллинистический и архаический периоды // *Мерв в древней и средневековой истории востока. III: Мерв и парфянская эпоха*. Ашхабад, 1992. С. 21–22). Cf. also *Olbricht M.J.* Parthia et ultiores gentes. Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen dem arsakidischen Iran und den Nomaden der eurasischen Steppen. München 1998. S. 74; *Idem*. The Ochos river in the classical sources: a study in the historical geography of northeastern Iran and Middle Asia // *Центральная Азия: Источники, история, культура. Труды конференции, посвященной 80-летию Е.А. Давидович и Б.А. Литвинского*. Москва, 3–5 апреля 2003 года / Т.К. Мкртычев, Т.Г. Алпаткина, С.Б. Болелов, О.Н. Иневаткина. М., 2003. С. 114–117.

¹¹ Markwart J. Wehrot. S. 3–4. Cf. *Idem* (*Marquart J.*). *Erānšahr nach der Geographie des Ps. Moses Xorenac'i* (=Abh. Königl. Ges. der Wiss. Göttingen, phil.-hist. Klasse. N.F. III. No. 2). B., 1901. S. 230, Anm. 1.

¹² For example, *Хлопин И.Н.* Историческая география южных областей Средней Азии. Античность и раннее средневековье. Ашхабад, 1983. С. 37.

¹³ *Пьянков И.В.* Античные источники о Средней Азии и их интерпретация // *ВДИ*. 2004. № 1. С. 101.

meant Parthia proper, as the passage quoted is part of a description of Hyrcania and its neighboring Parthia proper. Parthia proper is the area between the Caspian Gates next to the Teheran area up to the Harīrūd basin in western Afghanistan (Strabo XI.9.2, XI.8.1–3). In other words, it is modern Khorasan in north-eastern Iran, at the heart of which there are vast mountains. The term “very close” (ἐγγυτάτω) implies that the Ochos ran outside of Khorasan. Already for this reason identifying the Ochos with the Atrak, as is sometimes found in literature, is false because the latter has its source in the heart of Khorasan, therefore it ran right through the land of the Parthians. Similarly, the Ochos cannot be identified with the Tedzhen as this one is a confluence of the Khorasan River Kashafrūd, flowing across Parthia proper, with Harīrūd, which runs from Afghanistan. Apollodoros' information is intelligible only on the assumption that the Ochos flowed very close to Parthia proper, which implies identification with the Usboi, a former extension of the Āmū Daryā, feeding into the Caspian Sea. The existence of the Usboi cutting across steppes and deserts of Turkmenistan is an essential factor to be considered in identifying the rivers of ancient Central Asia. The Usboi flowed exactly as Apollodoros described the Ochos: very close to the land of the Parthians.

In another fragment, also based on Apollodoros, Strabo XI.8.1 relates:

Then comes the desert which is separated from Hyrcania by the Sarnios River as one goes eastwards and towards the Ochos River.

The information conveyed is clear enough: the Sarnios separates Hyrcania from the desert, with the Ochos following its course further to the north. The reference point for the description is apparently today's Golestān province in northeastern Iran, created in 1997 in place of Gorgān and Gonbad-e Kāvus/Qābus districts. The province is coextensive ancient Hyrcania proper. It would be useful to identify the Sarnios river. This precise form of name is known only to Strabo, apparently after Apollodoros. Possibly the Zonius river known to Plinius (NH 6.15/36) is just the Sarnios. According to Strabo/Apollodoros, the Sarnios in a sense bordered on a desert, but it would be difficult to trace the frontier between desert and Hyrcania proper along the Gorgān river, which flowed south of the Atrak. In antiquity, the latter watercourse was the effective northern frontier of the arable lands of Hyrcania proper, an extension of which was the Dahistān agricultural “enclave”. To the north of the Atrakrūd, apart from Dahistān, lay steppes and deserts extending to the Lower Usboi. If this is so, it is probably correct to identify the Sarnios with the Atrak. Remembering that the Ochos flowed a certain distance from the Sarnios, it should be sought further north of the Atrak – this observation again points to the Usboi.

To trace the Ochos, it is useful to locate the land known as Nesaia, which Strabo mentions in passages XI.7.2 and XI.7.3 describing Hyrcania. One authority on the geography of the region is Apollodoros of Artemita. In his

description of Hyrcania, Strabo also borrowed from Alexander's historians. Strabo 11.7.2 places Hyrcanian Nesaia as follows:

Nesaia belongs to Hyrcania, although some writers set it down as an independent district.

Strabo's Nesaia (Old Iranian *Nisāya*) lay somewhere in the frontier of Hyrcania and Parthia proper. Where exactly, then, are we to look for it? Ancient sources permit a fairly precise description of Hyrcania's southern and western borders, but none mentions any Nesaia existing there. It was apparently a region in the less familiar northern or north-eastern fringe of Hyrcania. The circumstances being such, the most probable location of Hyrcanian Nesaia/Nisāya seems to be north of Atrakrūd, perhaps in the area of the Meshed-Misrian plain, i. e., Dahistān and adjacent territories. Those parts were extremely rarely considered by ancient authors, except for the well-informed Apollodoros of Artemita. In antiquity, Hyrcania's border was principally traced along the Atrak, but antique sources often attribute to that country lands extending up to the Oxos, i. e., the Usboi. And so, Strabo XI.6.1 (after Eratosthenes and Patrocles) has Hyrcania reach the Oxos. Elsewhere, Strabo reports that the Oxos traversed Hyrcania (Strabo XI.7.3 – after Eratosthenes?). In Ptolemaios (Geogr. VI.9.1), Hyrcania is a land between Media and the Oxos outlet into the Caspian Sea.

To conclude, in antiquity the area north of the Atrak was not a strictly nomadic region as vibrant settlement processes existed on the Meshed-Misrian plain known as Dahistān. Single permanent settlements also existed further north, at the mouth of the Usboi. It seems that Hyrcanian Nesaia should be located somewhere between the Atrak and the Balkhan Mountains on the Lower Usboi, including Dahistān. Strabo's uncertainty reflected not only its unspecified location, but also the use of the name Hyrcania in two senses: as Hyrcania proper, i. e., the Gorgān (at present Golestān) province, and as greater Hyrcania, including Nesaia/Nisāya.

Another ancient author, Klaudios Ptolemaios, knows of Nesaia, or more exactly of the people of Nesaioi in Hyrcania, and again, his source appears to be Apollodoros. Ptolemaios' account causes serious interpretive difficulty. As he describes Areia, a land in western Afghanistan on the Harīrūd, Ptolemaios (Geogr. VI.17) places in the north of the region a people named *Nisaioi/Nesaioi* right next to the *Astauenoī*. The latter are difficult to place in Areia as no other source makes a reference to them being there. As it happens, the same applies to the Nesaioi. Apparently, the Astauenoī and the Nesaioi are wrongly placed. Yet what Ptolemaios is correct about is their mutual neighbourhood. The Roman geographer made a similar mistake for small Margiana on the Morghāb river, where he squeezed several peoples from outside that land, including Derbikkai, Massagetai, Parnoi, and Dahae (Geogr. VI.10). Still, this mistaken location reveals a relative order, since those peoples were neighbours, except

not in small Margiana, but in the much bigger expanse of Turkmenistan. In chapter VI.9.5, Ptolemaios mentions in maritime Hyrcania a people known as Maxeraī, and later also Astauenoī. The Maxeraī were apparently inhabitants of the Hyrcanian River Maxeras valley (Ptol. VI.9.2). Of rivers, Ptolemaios knows in Hyrcania two: the Maxeras and the Oxos. They probably were the main rivers in Hyrcania proper, the Gorgānrūd, and the Usboi. Plinius knows in Hyrcania of the border watercourse Sideris, and further south the Maziris and the Straor (NH VI.18/46). The Maziris is certainly Ptolemaios' Maxeras, i. e., the Gorgānrūd, the main river of Hyrcania proper, while the Sideris is the Atrak.

That Ptolemaios' data are correct overall is confirmed by Isidoros of Charax (Stathm. 11), who places the land of Astauene with its capital Asaak as lying between Hyrcania and Parthia proper (Parthyene), located along the middle and upper course of the Atrak. The Nesaioi people mentioned by Ptolemaios bordered on the Astauenoī in the north. The Nesaioi apparently occupied Dahistān and other areas between the Atrak and the Great Balkhan Mountains and the Lower Usboi.

Combining data from Apollodoros of Artemita and Aristobulos led Strabo to confuse the Ochos with Bactria's major river, the Oxos (Āmū Daryā). It is demonstrated in Strabo's passage XI.7.3, which mentions by name Apollodoros and Aristobulos as his sources of information (the latter about the Oxos). Strabo writes:

Hyrcania is traversed by the rivers Ochos and Oxos to their outlets into the sea; and of these, the Ochos flows also through Nesaia, but some say that the Ochos empties into the Oxos.

Furthermore, Strabo underscores that Aristobulos declared the Oxos to be the largest of the rivers he saw in Asia, except those in India. As to the Ochos, it is named by Apollodoros. Whence does Strabo's uncertainty stem? Strabo knows well the Oxos as a river flowing from the Indian Mountains (XI.7.4) to the Hyrcanian Sea, i. e., the Caspian Sea (XI.6.1; XI.7.3-4; XI.11.5). It is a correct picture as the Āmū Daryā was then connected with the Usboi and fed into the Caspian Sea. If that be the case, the Hyrcanian Ochos of which Apollodoros wrote was at least in part, i. e., as the Usboi, identical with the Oxos. However, in Strabo XI.11.5 there appears the Bactrian Ochos, known to the tradition of Alexander's historians in the school known as the Vulgate and later confirmed by several Roman geographers (Plinius, Ptolemaios, Ammianus Marcellinus). Having before him accounts by Apollodoros of Artemita on the Hyrcanian Ochos, or the Usboi, data by Aristobulos on the Oxos, or the Āmū Daryā–Usboi, and on the Ochos in Bactria, Strabo could not reconcile the contradiction resulting from the use of one name for different rivers and from an incomplete understanding of his sources, and generally the hydrography of Central Asia.

According to Strabo XI.7.3 and XI.11.5, the Bactrian Ochos flowed into the

Oxos. The source of this information was most likely Aristobulos. A historian of Alexander the Great, Curtius Rufus VII.10.15, places the Ochos not far from the Oxos and the Margiana in connection with Alexander's operations. Such location of the action is also confirmed by the Metz Epitome 14, which, in relating Alexander's campaign in Central Asia, mentions *Ochus*:

Deinde per agrum Sogdianum agmen duxit. ex eo porro in Bactriam pervenit et Bessum adduci iussit eum que suspensum more Persarum fundis necavit. Deinde post diem undecimum ad flumen Ochum pervenit. id transit. inde ad Oxum flumen devenit.

In the light of Curtius' account and the *Metz Epitome*, it should be thought that the Ochos was near the Oxos and in the vicinity of Margiana, or the Marv Oasis. In the latter country, Alexander stayed for some time¹⁴. The presence of Macedonians in Margiana is testified to by Plin. VI.18/46 as he writes about a city named Alexandria being founded there. Alexander conducted intensive operations against Spitamenes in western Bactria and Sogdiana in 329–328 BC. The Macedonian army's main base was situated in Bactra/Zariaspa. The political-military context indicates that the Ochos should be sought in western Bactria, near Margiana, i. e., in the western part of Afghan Turkestan.

Plinius goes into great detail about the Bactrian Ochos (VI.18/48):

Bactri quorum oppidum Zariasta, quo postea Bactra, a flumine appellatum est. Gens haec optinet aversa montis Paropanisi exadversus fontes Indi; includitur flumine Ochos.

This information implies that the Ochos was the country's frontier. This fits in perfectly well with existing findings whereby the Ochos ran not far from Margiana, and thus in the vicinity of the western fringes of Bactria, i. e., in present Afghan Turkestan. Plinius XXXI.75/39 mentions the Ochos and the Oxos as rivers in Bactria:

praeterea et apud Bactros amnes Ochus et Oxus ex adpositis montibus deferunt salis ramenta.

This additionally proves the existence of the Ochos river in north-western Afghanistan.

Some fairly ample data about Bactria's rivers are supplied by Ptolemaios (Geogr. VI.11.2–4); he knows in the right order the Ochos and the Dargomanes, together flowing into the Oxos, like the Zariaspes and the Artamis, and the Dargoidas. According to Ptolemaios coordinates, the Ochos ran furthest west of Bactrian rivers. This agrees with Plinius' data on the Ochos as Bactrian

border. Ammianus Marcellinus 33.6.57 writes of two pairs of rivers in Bactria: the Artamis-Zariaspes and the Ochus-Orgomanes, which merge and run into the Oxos. This is a somewhat distorted list taken from Ptolemaios, with the Dargoidas missing.

If the Ochos flowed in the western fringe of Bactria, then its probable identification is with the Āb-e Qaysar, traversing the districts Maymana and Andkhūy¹⁵. The Dargomanes, which Ptolemaios says made a confluence with the Ochos, is probably the Shīrīn Tagāo. Indeed, the river Qaysar may be thought a boundary of Bactria as Plinius sees it. Here ended farm land and began steppes and a desert stretching as far as the Morghāb valley, or Margiana. Possibly, too, the Bactrian Ochos emptied into the Kelif Usboi, i. e., the Āmū Daryā system.

Summing up: Careful analysis of Strabo's data and other ancient accounts proves that the name Ochos used in them refers to the Usboi in the northern periphery of Hyrcania and the Āb-e Qaysar/Andkhūy river in western Bactria (Afghan Turkestan)¹⁶.

¹⁵ So A. Herrmann (for him, the Āb-e Qaysar/Shīrīn Tagāo is the Ram Gul Tagao/Sangalak).

¹⁶ H. Yule (*Yule H. Essay on the Geography of the Valley of the Oxus* // *Wood J. A personal Narrative of a Journey to the Source of the River Oxus*. L., 1872. P. XXIII, note 1), and W. Tomaschek (*Tomaschek W. Centralasiatische Studien: Sogdiana*. Wien, 1877 (Sitzungsberichte der phil.-hist. Klasse der kais.-koenigl. Akad. der Wissenschaften 87). S. 109) linked the designation of the river Vakh/Vakhāb to the ancient name *Ochos*. According to J. Markwart, the local designation of the Vakhān river, *Wux-* (*Tajik Vax-*), mirrors the old Iranian form *vahvi-*, meaning "good". This name would correspond to the Ochos in classical sources (*Markwart J. Wehrot*. S. 52). A similar hypothesis, connecting the ancient name *Ochos* with the local modern designations *Wux-* (Vakhī language) or *Vax-* (Tajik), was proposed by several scholars, cf. *Смеб-лин-Каменский И.М. Река иранской прародины*. С. 72–74. Based on Yule's, Tomaschek's and Markwart's proposals, C. Rapin and F. Grenet (*Grenet F., Rapin C. Alexander, Aī Khanum, Termez: Remarks on the Spring Campaign of 328* // *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*. 1998. Vol. 12. P. 79–89; *Rapin C. L'incompréhensible Asie centrale de la carte de Ptolémée. Propositions pour un décodage* // *Ibid.* P. 201–225) put forward the hypothesis that all information on the Bactrian Ochos really applies to the Vakhāb. Such identification leads to a far-reaching reinterpretation of Alexander's military operations in Central Asia in 328 BC. Yet on closer analysis of sources, identifying the Ochos of classical records with the Vakhāb, Vakhān or other headstreams of the Āmū Daryā is improbable.

¹⁴ *Olbrycht M.J. Aleksander Wielki i świat irański*. Rzeszów, 2004. S. 211–222.

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